



A Message
From
The
Secretary

The legislature is in full swing and KDHE is taking steps to move several measures through this session to enhance our ability to better protect the public's health and to insure a sustainable environment. We are working with legislators to strengthen the state's quarantine and isolation measures to address times when larger groups of individuals are impacted by contagious illness or disease and must restrict public contact for a time. In addition, we are proposing a change to the new cancer registry system, which tracks all Kansas cancer cases, to now include follow up of cases for public health needs. Environmental initiatives include requiring new landfill operators, or any existing landfill operators seeking major modifications, to complete a preliminary site evaluation for our review and approval. This will allow KDHE to provide more assistance to communities and applicants earlier in the process before significant decisions are made about the site.

Along with the above initiatives, KDHE is embarking upon some additional efforts intended to have a positive impact for both our customers and employees. This month we begin work on a comprehensive, agency-wide strategic plan to provide guidance under which each division, bureau, office, and program can serve Kansans in a more integrated fashion, while still carrying out its unique obligations. In addition, the agency's Task Force recommendations are now being reassessed to determine which recommendations are in need of additional action. These efforts are intended to improve employees' working conditions as well as KDHE's ability to provide excellent customer service.

As you have likely heard, health issues are a priority for Governor Sebelius this year and KDHE will be heavily involved in the HealthyKANSAS initiative, which targets cost, coverage and containment. KDHE will work to address three modifiable health behaviors that account for a disproportionate share of health care costs: poor nutrition, inadequate physical activity and tobacco use. KDHE component of the HealthyKANSAS initiative, HealthyKANSAS: *Taking Steps Together*, will focus on children in schools, adults in the workplace and helping seniors age in a healthy way (with the assistance of Kansas Department on Aging). Much more specific information on these initiatives will be announced in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Two important health issues are being highlighted this month, including the American Heart Association's Go **Red** for Women campaign held on February 4, and

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Black HIV/AIDS Awareness and Information Day on February 7. Go **Red** for Women Day encourages everyone to wear **red** to remind us that heart disease is the leading cause of death for all women and to promote healthier lifestyles. Gov. Sebelius has proclaimed Feb. 7 as Black HIV/AIDS Awareness and Information Day in Kansas.

Census and health data from 2003 indicates nearly 30 percent of all newly diagnosed HIV and AIDS cases were among African Americans. On this day, Kansans at risk for HIV and AIDS are encouraged to get tested.

A recent program KDHE launched to address one of our health concerns is called "Immunize and Win a Prize." The program provides parents with small prizes for getting their children (birth to two years of age) the full series of immunizations to prevent such deadly or debilitating diseases as pertussis, diphtheria, and polio. Additional prizes are available through drawings including family vacations. A 10-county pilot project was very successful in improving immunization rates (14 to 44 percent improvements were seen) and we expect to see statewide improvements with this program in the near term.

KDHE recently took additional steps to protect Kansans by updating fish consumption advisories after an extensive review of new data from fish tissue samples collected across the state. KDHE worked with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to issue the new advisories, which now include guidelines for mercury, PCBs, perchlorate, in addition to the previous guidelines for chlordane. The advisories also include guidelines for lead and cadmium in shellfish. The data gathered in recent years, as well as additional sampling provided new information not previously available for these advisories.

In recent months, KDHE began to address an environmental issue in Kansas that is growing nationwide: the handling of electronic waste or e-waste (computers, monitors, televisions, etc.). A successful pilot project revealed the need for additional assessment of such a program. After only a month long program in three counties, KDHE collected some 100 tons of e-waste (enough to fill 15 28-ft trailers) and will use the information to determine additional programs or initiatives.

This month we welcome two new members to the organization. Feb. 27, our new health director, Dr. Howard Rodenberg begins his service to the state at KDHE. As he comes to the agency, he will bring a rich background in emergency medical service, practice as a physician, teacher, and dedicated community and organizational leadership as director of Volusia County Health Department in Daytona Beach, Fla. This past year Dr. Rodenberg played a leadership role in helping the county deal with damage from an unprecedented three hurricanes. While the county has a population approaching 400,000, during annual special events, the population swells to about 2 million people. Another new member I hope that you will get to know is Shea Robinson.

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Shea has already begun to serve in her new role to provide administrative support for me and other key Office of the Secretary staff. Ms. Robinson brings a rich experience and deep skill set to this work. I am very pleased she and Dr. Rodenberg have chosen to join our KDHE team.

The work we do at KDHE has a lasting impact on Kansans. Success stories are all around us as we continue to work hard each and every day. Just this month we received feedback from several KDHE customers about publicity from our Early Detection Works Program (which provides free screenings to women for breast and cervical cancer). What they learned directed them to resources allowing them to be tested and in several cases, cancers were found that can now be treated before more severe complications arise. It's important for all of us to remember the individual impact our work has on those around us both today and for generations to come!

Be Well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Rodenberg", written in a cursive style.